

« Care of the Lower Senses as the Basis for Social Competence »

Deepening Course for Waldorf Early Childhood Educators in Armenia

October 18 - 24, 2015

Who would think that the development of moral and social capacities has something to do with getting dressed, wiping one's nose, eating raisins, or climbing trees? Dr. Klaus Jährling elaborated on this view, already familiar to many Waldorf educators, in a recent deepening course in Yerevan, Armenia. Care of the lower senses (touch, life, self-movement and balance) in early childhood can lead to the ability in adulthood to develop social capacities such as caring, tolerance, compassion and independent judgment. Soul qualities in adults are the metamorphoses of bodily characteristics in early childhood. Details regarding the bodily development of the young child are therefore of real significance. If the child is cared for lovingly on a daily basis with attentiveness and competence, these qualities will blossom later into social capacities. Therefore aspects of daily care were discussed in detail, such as warmth, chewing and eating, the development of the jaw, lymphatic difficulties, fingernail biting, bed wetting, sleep disturbances, etc.

And who would think that the way we move through the room, our gestures, the quality of our voice and manner of speaking would have

a greater effect on the young child than all our admonitions? In order to broaden this out beyond one particular point of view, the musician and eurythmist Astrid Prokofieff offered a number of exercises.

"Through loosening exercises and breathing and speech formation exercises, participants could experience progress within a few short hours. They achieved a notable improvement in their voices, became freer in their ability to overcome shyness, and experienced joy in singing and playing. In addition to the study of the senses, practical workshops in training the senses through play, observation, and kindergarten rhythmic games completed the content of the course", wrote Astrid Prokofieff. She added, "it was an intensive, heartfelt, culinarily rich and impressive week in Erevan."

Further Information: In the Yerevan Waldorf kindergarten there are 80 children. It is an independent, private establishment, recognized by the government and able to practice Waldorf education without compromises.

What looks today like a success story was and is only possible however through the greatest effort - the kindergarten exists solely on the basis of contributions from parents and donors; it has no permanent home and often has to move. There is an acute space shortage; at the moment there are only two rooms for play and two sleeping rooms available; this means that each group has 35 - 40 children with only 3 adults. The kindergarten is open from 8:30 in the morning to 6:30 in the evening.



Participants in the deepening course



Outdoor play in the Waldorf kindergarten in Yerevan, Armenia

